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ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT HARVARD UNION, CAMBRIDGE,
MASS., MARCH 23, 1914

By

SENATOR HENRY F. HOLLIS
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE "



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"By Senator HENRY F. HOLLIS, of New Hampshire.

"FROM ONE SENATOR'S VIEWPOINT.

"I was graduated at Harvard in 1892. I believe I am the first Harvard man of radical views to occupy a seat in the Senate.

"I do not fairly represent Harvard College in the Senate of the United States. I am quite sure that Harvard College is not representative of the United States nor of New England. She is too conservative, too hidebound. She lags behind the times. She does not lead; she follows.

"In the Middle West the bond between some States and their leading universities is very close. The State legislatures submit questions of public policy to the college faculties, and receive opinions which largely control their action. This is particularly the case in Wisconsin. Imagine, if you please, the Legislature of Massachusetts requesting an opinion from the faculty of Harvard College. Imagine the reception it would get on Beacon Hill, if it should find its way there.

"It is a great pity that the political arm of our State and National Governments should not receive support from our colleges. Our leading college professors look on politics as a low pursuit, a nasty business. Our leading legislators regard college opinion as a joke. Both these attitudes are very real: they are equally mistaken.

"There are many brave, patriotic men among the hosts of brainy, upright professors on our college faculties. There are many brave, patriotic men among the Senators of the United States. But the college men regard most politicians as corrupt and insincere, while the politicians regard college professors as impractical theorists. Worse than this, they believe that all college views are tainted by the great sums of money which have been bestowed on our colleges by men of great wealth.

"College professors are notoriously ill-paid. They must live respectably; they must associate with people of culture and refinement; they must educate their children at expensive schools and colleges. They can not save enough to become independent; they are dependent for their very living on the governing board of the college; and the governing board must satisfy the rich men who make princely donations to the college. The belief is prevalent among public men in Washington that every eastern college is eating from the hand

that has robbed the pockets of the people. Until this belief is dissipated Congress will have little faith in our colleges or in college men.

"There is a firm belief among public men that the President of the United States was forced from the presidency of a leading eastern college because he tried to stem the tide of snobbery, and make that college democratic in the social not the political sense. In Stover at Yale we read the brave attempt of Owen Johnson to reveal the true weakness of our dearest rival.

"In New England our colleges still have a wide influence. A member of the faculty who makes address on public questions is listened to with considerable respect, but when it is learned that a college professor has been talking in favor of certain railroad policies from a supposed interest in public affairs, while he has been secretly receiving pay from the railroad whose policies he advocates, our confidence is sadly shaken.

"A college at best will act the part of an old man, a conservative old man, in politics. Worse than that, it will act the part of an old society man in politics; it is likely to be snobbish, supercilious, and overnice.

"We know that the young man is the progressive spirit, the radical in politics. As he gets older he becomes conservative, his political arteries harden, he slows down. Not until he becomes too old for radical action does he become important enough to enter the faculty. The dominant note, then, in college circles is the note of the old man, the man of influence, the conservative.

"And among the students, where youth is, we find the chill of convention, the rule of the social lion. A few leading spirits attain prominence on their merits, but in a large college the leaders, as a rule, are men of rich and influential families. The man in the baggy suit, with the country hair cut, stays in the background during his college course; he feels that he has nothing in common with the rich young blade who cuts a dash with his automobile or riding horse; he sticks to his books, gets what good he can from his college course, leaves no impress on the college constitution, and does not return for commencement. If he does drift back, he finds the same society men in charge, the same recognition of social caste, and he doesn't come back again.

"The result is that our colleges represent a very thin upper crust of our great American life. They are always respectable, always conservative, always reactionary. That is why rich men who find things rigged about right for their money-making operations are glad to contribute to the colleges. The colleges are the greatest dead-weight the capitalists can fasten upon the necks of the American people. The standpatter is conservative; wealth is conservative; the college is conservative. They are all in the same boat.

"My best friends will point out to me to-morrow that there is no help for this, that it has always been so, and it always will be so. I admit that it has always been so; I admit that the great colleges in this country have never led in a great reform; that the great colleges in England have never led in a great reform. But I refuse to admit that colleges are incorrigible; I refuse to admit that they are beyond salvation.

"I would begin by declining gifts from men of great wealth. If new buildings are needed, I would call on the alumni for contributions, limiting the amount to be subscribed by a single donor. I would increase the income by increasing the tuition fees. An education achieved at some sacrifice is more valuable than one acquired through charity.

"College life should be made less expensive, more simple; it should be standardized. No more elaborate dormitories should be built. The popularity of the oldest dormitories in the yard shows that college men are not afraid of discomfort. New buildings should be severely plain and uniform. Men of the same college class should be quartered in similar buildings. Rooms and meals should be in fact 'commons' and 'commons' should be compulsory.

"Every man should be compelled to live simply and to take part in military drill once a week. Automobiles and other forms of show should be prohibited. It is not good for a man to have everything in life before he is fairly grown.

"Class elections should be by Australian ballot, preceded by primaries, and only men of high scholarship should be eligible to office. Every effort should be made to promote a democratic spirit and to crush out snobbishness. I should impose a limit on each man's allowance. If this did not suit the very rich man, he could easily find a college where he would be welcome.

"But, most important of all, college men should be taught what is wrong with the world and the way to set it right; what poverty is and where it exists, what makes it and what will prevent it; what injustice is, its causes and its remedies; the reasons for high cost of living and the way to bring it down; the problem of immigration and how to make country life worth living. They should be taught human interests, the brotherhood of man, the glory of self-sacrifice, the passion of service to mankind. They should be taught these things until they are athirst for the battle against the wrongs and evils and injustices of the world.

"When a man is distinguished in public service of any kind he should be invited to speak to the student the truth as he sees it, so that they may catch the contagion of his spirit and the stimulus of his force and courage.

"The motto of Harvard is 'Veritas,' a Latin word meaning 'truth.' I have availed myself freely of that mute invitation to speak the truth as I see it, and I thank you for the privilege.

"But Harvard's 'Veritas' does not mean the truth of the past alone, the truth that lies buried in the page of geology, that has stood the test of centuries, and has received the approval of scholars long since dead. Harvard's 'Veritas' should be the living truth, not the truth of the last century, the last generation, or the last decade, but truth in the making, the truth of the great, throbbing, kindly, cruel world that pulses to-day just outside the college yard, the vital truth that makes a man boil at injustice and burn to make the next year better than the last."

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